

DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Anna Whiting Sorrel
Acting Director



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GOVERNOR

STATE OF MONTANA

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HUMAN AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DIVISION
RAVALLI COUNTY OFFICE OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE
310 NORTH 3RD STREET
HAMILTON, MT 59840

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JAN 26 2009

January 23, 2009

Ravalli County Commissioners

Dear Community Partner:

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Due to continued increased demand for our services, and the resulting increase in workload for staff, more changes are being made in our local intake process at the Office of Public Assistance.

Effective February 2, 2009, our intake times will be:

9:00 am – 2:30 pm Monday through Thursday

Fridays will be reserved for other work associated with the issuance of benefits to clients.

We will continue to conduct interviews & process applications for Emergency Assistance and Expedited SNAP benefits on Fridays.

Since this is a change from the intake processes we've had in place for some time now, I want to assure that you are aware of the changes so that you can make your customers aware of them as well – especially when making referrals to our agency. We continue to encourage applicants to appear as early in the day as possible to assure that they will be seen in a fairly quick manner. An applicant's wait to see an OPA Case Manager will likely be shorter in the mornings.

Another change that may be of interest to you and your customers is that there will be NO ASSIGNED Case Manager for households that contain minor children. Those households will have their case managed by a group of Case Managers. Our intent in changing to this universal, or shared, caseload method is that it will make for easier transitions when there are staff absences or vacancies, will assure that each and every case is handled in a chronological order, that initial benefits are available to our applicants at the earliest possible time, and that monthly benefits are always available timely.

Our office remains open & accessible from 8 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday. Applications continue to be accepted at any time – and can be dropped off, mailed in, faxed in, or put through our after hours drop slot (on the right hand side of the entryway).

The application for assistance can be found online at <http://vhsp.dphhs.mt.gov/publicassistance/index.shtml> While the application may be completed online, it must still be printed and submitted through conventional means at this time.

Although face-to-face interviews are not required other than for Emergency Assistance & Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), applicants are encouraged to complete an interview to assure that the best information possible is available to both the customer and the OPA Case Manager, and so that accurate determinations of eligibility can be accomplished. **Telephone interviews** are available so that applicants do not have to come in to the office to see a Case Manager (other than for TANF & TANF related programs). Please ask your clients to inform us at the time they submit the application if they wish to have a telephone interview.

We will maintain "walk-in" hours for current clients between the hours of 8 am and 9 am, and 4 pm to 5 pm, Monday through Friday.

Please assure that this information is passed along to your staff and customers so that they are not surprised by the change effective February 2, 2009. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me at 375-6090.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patty West".

Patty West
County Director